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ABSTRACT

Empathic listening is a specific category of listening in which people actively engage in dialogue at the affective level, with the listener attempting to understand and acknowledge the present feelings being experienced by the speaker. Since empathic listening is central to human communication processes, any speech communication curriculum which is thorough must at the very least include sections, units, and/or courses related to empathic listening. In such teaching, certain theoretical foundations should be established, including the entire transactional process, the nature of dialogic communication, the definition of empathic listening, basic information on the nature of feelings, empathic listening models, and Robert Carkhuff's dimensions of effective listening. Some of the major procedures to blend theory and skills are: (1) always keep the complete communication process/model in mind; (2) discuss feelings of self-consciousness in the early stages of practice; and (3) use an additive approach in practice sessions to develop progressively the component skills. In practicing these skills it is also important to build a "feeling word" vocabulary, begin practice with dyads and later increase group size, illustrate each Carkhuff component through specific exercises, and follow up each round of practice with a discussion of applications, difficulties, and insights. (Thirty-one notes are included and a selected Carkhuff bibliography is attached. Appendixes contain a listening adaptation of Carkhuff Human Resources Development Model and a copy of the Empathy Scales.) (SR)

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TEACHING EMPATHIC LISTENING

WITHIN THE SPEECH CURRICULUM

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TEACHING EMPATHIC LISTENING WITHIN THE SPEECH CURRICULUM

T. Dean Thomlison

Purpose

Contemporary research and personal experience have demonstrated the major role listening plays in our daily communication. Empathic listening is a specific category of listening in which we actively engage in dialogue at the affective level. The listener attempts to understand and acknowledge the present feelings being experienced by the speaker. The applications of empathic listening in the speech curriculum are numerous and varied.

This paper explores the teaching of empathic listening in the speech curriculum. A brief background of listening education is presented first as a foundation for the advocating of empathic listening education. Second, a rationale for teaching empathic listening in a speech curriculum is provided. Third, practical suggestions are given for methodologies and approaches related to teaching empathic listening.

I. Listening Education Background

A. Historical Perspective on Listening Education:

Just as the skill of speaking has a long history dating to before the Greek orators, interest in listening can be traced to ancient thinkers and writers. For example, Plutarch[1] presented a fairly comprehensive examination of listening skills in public speaking situations nearly two-thousand years ago. More recent pioneers include Tucker[2], Rankin[3], Brown[4], Bird[5], Nichols[6], Stevens[7], Barbara[8], among others. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's listening research and literature concentrated primarily on attention, comprehension and retention. In 1945 the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on the English Curriculum established the Vertical Committee on Listening, thus recognizing its importance.

The 1950's brought about a change in the emphasis placed on the teaching of listening. A large number of academicians and researchers began to engage in research and writing on the subject of listening. References in journals and textbooks on listening techniques increased. For example, in 1952 the first book with an entire chapter devoted to listening was published by the NCTE ("The Program in Listening" in The English Language Curriculum). In 1955 a complete issue of an educational journal focused on listening (Education, Vol. 75, No. 5). Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens wrote the first full-length book on listening in 1957 (Are You Listening?). In addition to publications such as these, the first standarized listening test was developed for grades 9 to 13 (The Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test).[9]

Through the 1950's the listening literature continued to present an understanding of the listening process as reception of aural data, cognitive processing and recall of those data. Input/output congruence was used to measure listening effectiveness. Little if any emphasis was placed on the interpersonal experience which was the environment for that input/output. Instead, the focus was placed on information, recall, facts and explicit content of messages.[10]

A change became evident in the listening literature beginning in the 1950's and gained impetus in the 1960's. The concept of "speech" (including speaking and listening skills) was gradually supplanted by the concept of the "communication process". The field of psychology also began to address the subject of listening. In 1955, Carl Rogers coined the term "active listening" to describe the facilitative function of listening with empathy. Extensive research and test construction in the area of humanistic psychology emerged which stressed the salience of empathy. Humanistic psychology has made

numerous contributions to understanding listening in general and empathic listening in particular.[11] Theories of counseling and psychotherapy provided the framework for the concept of active listening using empathy. An emerging approach was evolving which viewed listening from an active and interactive perspective. The idea of listening being an active and vital component of human communication was still in its infancy, but it was gaining momentum rapidly.

Although the construct of empathy dates back as far as Plato and Aristotle,[12] it was not actively recognized in speech communication theory until the 1960's.[13] Active listening, as opposed to comprehensive listening, involves not only the ability to hear what is said, understand meaning and recall facts, but also includes listening beyond the words to the affective or feeling component of the proffered message to gain an empathic understanding of our communication partner. Empathy involves both the cognitive and affective abilities of the listener.

Throughout the 1960's and 1970's the subject of empathy stimulated a large quantity of research in a variety of disciplines.[14] Carl Rogers' non-directive approach to psychotherapy posits the three fundamental characteristics of the helping relationship are congruence or genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding--all of which necessarily must be communicated to the other before healthy personality change and growth can be facilitated.[15] The heart of Rogerian empathy is perception of the "internal frame of reference" of the other person with accuracy "as if" you were that person.[16]

Arnett and Nakagawa point out that subjective experience is a fundamental component of Rogers' empathic understanding and the empathic literature in speech communication:

> In sum, empathic listening literature in speech communication largely presupposes a fundamental dualism between two independently existing subjects, correlative to the communicative functions of speaking and listening. Based upon the necessity to reconcile the presumed separation between self and other, the empathic listener's task is to infer the psychological intentions or internal states of the speaker. Accordingly, subjective experience becomes the arbiter of meaning ('Meaning is in people, not words'). 17

The emphasis on empathic listening in the 1970's and 1980's was not without its detractors. Questions have been raised about this popular focus on empathy as central to effective listening. Empathy involves a kind of separation or putting aside of self in order to concentrate on the speaker's self. Arnett and Nakagawa rightly warn that this reification of self has led to viewing the self as "an empirical object that one attempts to construct, rather than a hypothetical notion."[18] Combined with a trend toward seeing meaning as within a person (rather than created through a transaction), the listening process has often been viewed as a series of techniques.

B. Current Status of Listening Education:

As a result of the above-mentioned trends in listening eduction, one of the current directions taken in the teaching of listening is the "skills" orientation. For example, the work on empathy of humanistic psychologists such as Rogers, Truax and Carkhuff has often been distorted and reduced to technique.[19] The transactional perspective has often been supplanted by ignoring the communication framework within which the listening skills/processe function. This can lead to a focus on the separate individuals engaged in the communicative act instead of a focus on the "between".

A number of specific types of listening skills have evolved through the skills orientation. Many communication texts, however, use different labels to signify the varieties of listening behaviors and there is consistency, but not agreement, in their listings of the component skills. It appears that empathy

is an important component of much of the listening skills emphasis and this is still a predominant approach in listening education, as well as theory.

Perhaps as a backlash against the skills focus, there is now an emerging call among many theoreticians for more of a dialogic or transactional perspective for listening. Farra sees "relational listening" as the fourth stage in the evolution of listening theory. He cites the four stages or turning points as follows:

1. Plutarch's "Principles of Listening to Lectures"
2. Ralph Nichols' "Ten Bad Listening Habits"
3. Charles Kelly's "Empathic Listening"
4. "Relational Listening" 20

No matter what the context (interpersonal, small group, public speaking), Farra views the relationship as central to effective listening. While acknowledging the contributions of empathic listening and the resultant skills orientation, theorists such as Arnett and Nakagawa advocate a similar perspective. They declare, "The self, like the earth, can no longer be viewed as the center, but the person must be studied as situated in relationship with the ecological system or relational system between persons. . . . It is the literature of hermeneutics and a phenomenological dialogue that we recommend."[21] John Stewart concurs and advocates "interpretive listening" as an alternative. He rejects the focus on empathy as a universal approach to listening.[22]

Thus, much of contemporary thought related to empathic listening takes the view that empathy has broad applications to a variety of types of communication and it must be examined as part of a total communication process/transaction. Several theorists have suggested that the pure skills approach to listening education and research must be transcended. Their viewpoint urges us to move from the empathic inner premise of "getting in touch with selves" to a situational sensitivity of the on-going meaning created "between" selves, as

described by Martin Buber.[23] There need not be anything insincere or manipulative about the knowledge and practice of specific skills. The problem has been that listening educators and trainers have too often neglected to place the skills into the larger communication complex of the relationship.

Tom Bruneau provides an excellent conceptual review of empathy and empathic listening. He notes that contemporary communication literature gives very little attention to empathy: "In light of its centrality and importance to almost all human communication processes, especially listening, the concept has been inadequately treated or even neglected."[24]

II. Rationale for Teaching Empathic Listening

Empathic understanding is an essential component of human communication. It takes us beyond mechanical, skill-oriented approaches to communication education and into the realm of shared dialogic encounter. Bruneau observes that empathizing is basic to most nonegocentric thought and that empathic listening is what provides a connection between communication partners:

> Without empathic listening only a depersonalized and robotic kind of understanding could transpire between speakers and listeners, characterized by rigid and repetitive denotations. The art of being fully human is the art of practicing empathic listening as much as possible in every kind of communication situation. Such practice could make a big dent in the way of improved communication in many situations. Empathic listening is a way of becoming fully human; it is difficult; it requires much listening energy. However, the alternative is much too grim to consider. 25

Any speech communication curriculum which is thorough must at the very least include sections, units, and/or courses related to empathic listening since it is central to the human communication process. Furthermore, every major study of the frequency of verbal communication forms has found that more time is spent in listening than it is in reading, writing or speaking.[26] Ideally, then, an integration of the centrality of listening into the entire curriculum

is necessary to accurately reflect its importance to all forms of everyday interaction. Empathic listening is an essential part of what makes us uniquely human and, therefore, it should receive significant emphasis in the speech curriculum.

III. Methodologies and Approaches for Teaching Empathic Listening

In order to move beyond a skills orientation to teaching listeing, it is necessary to utilize an approach that combines theoretical constructs and skill development. Empathic listening can be integrated into the speech curriculum in a variety of ways through this blending of theory and practice.

In this section we will (A.) explore some theoretical foundations that should be established for any unit, section or course devoted to empathic listening in the speech curriculum, (B.) examine some implementation procedures which can be used as general guidelines, and (C.) suggest some specific skill components for practicing empathic listening.

A. Establish Theoretical Foundations:

1. No matter what the specific area of speech communication being taught (speech, debate, persuasion, language, small-group problem solving, nonverbal communication, etc.), the early sessions should concentrate upon an exploration of the entire transactional process. Communication variables for that specific area are examined and tied to the transactional model of communication and empathic understanding. For example, even in public speaking empathy can be applied by the audience members but also by the speaker. In his book entitled <u>The Empathic Communicator</u> William S. Howell emphasized the important role of empathy in the speech communication process. He advocates verbal interaction with members of the audience as a means to developing a dialogue with

them. "When audience and speaker converse in this fashion, listening becomes active, a higher level of attention is paid to the exchange, and items of the speech are better learned and retained than otherwise."[27]

2. Early sessions also place a high priority on interpersonal rapport among participants. "Ice breaker" exercises can be used to help participants feel comfortable and to build mutual trust. A trusting and caring atmosphere is encouraged since it is essential to the development of empathic listening skills.

3. The nature of dialogic communication can also be explored. The length of time devoted to this topic will vary depending upon the time available and the nature of the specific subject area being studied, but some time should be spent in examining the basic components of dialogue and its underlying assumptions about human interaction. This framework for practical skill development follows one of the patterns suggested by Arnett and Nakagawa in their call for alternatives to pure skill-oriented empathic listening. They state: "Such study could explore the effects and implications of a shift of attention from the internal self to a dialogical or hermeneutical transaction 'between' persons and the importance of contextual demands on our listening."[28] As with the foundation material on the transactional model of communication, the focus here is upon the development of shared meaning between the two partners instead of concentating upon the individual. This can substantially reduce the communication anxiety often experienced during skills development--the interaction becomes a joint venture instead of an individual act.

4. Review the definition of empathic listening in order to instill its

basic components each time it is applied to a specific area of the speech curriculum. One possible definition is that offered by Wolvin and Coakley:

> To feel and think with another, the listener must recreate the other person's world by sensing that world as if it were his or her own world; identify with the other's feelings and thoughts by entering the other's frame of reference; and replicate the other's feelings and thoughts by becoming a rational and emotional mirror. 29

This definition includes the three basic components of empathic listening: (1.) relating to our partner's world of experience, (2.) recognizing feelings and content in the message, and (3.) responding with active feedback.

5. Present and discuss basic information related to the nature of feelings. For example, the following "feeling guidelines" or feeling fundamentals could be presented: 30

    a.) Feelings are not good or bad, right or wrong.
    b.) Feelings are present in all human communication.
    c.) Recognize it is the way we think that results in feelings.
    d.) Learn to own and trust your feelings.
    e.) Report feelings rather than acting them out or holding them in.
    f.) Increase your "feeling word" vocabulary.
    g.) Report feelings as close as possible to the time they were felt, when deemed appropriate.
    h.) Acknowledge both content and feelings in messages received.

6. Select an empathic listening model to present as a focal point. This author generally uses a model developed by Robert Carkhuff that has broad applicability. It is a communication model with empathy as its foundation. (See the Carkhuff bibliography attached to this paper for selected references.) Become totally familiar with whatever model is selected before presentation to the students.

7. Present Robert Carkhuff's Human Resource Development Model (see the appendix) or another selected model. Use examples generously to insure

complete understanding of the basic model.

8. Present Robert Carkhuff's dimensions of effective listening by examining each of the eight components individually. (see skills section below for ideas on how to introduce each dimension). The empathy dimension must be examined first since it is the foundation for the other components. (see appendix for empathy scale) A thorough understanding of the rating scale for each component is also essential. The Carkhuff skill components are:

    a.) Empathy (or Empathic Understanding)
    b.) Respect
    c.) Warmth
    d.) Genuineness
    e.) Concreteness
    f.) Self-Disclosure
    g.) Confrontation
    h.) Immediacy

B. Utilize Implementation Procedures:

Some of the major procedures that can be used to implement this blending of theory and skills are provided below. These general guidelines can be utilized for any subject area within the speech curriculum as empathic listening is applied.

1. Emphasis is always placed on putting the pieces back together. That is, keep the complete communication process/model in mind.
2. It is inevitable during any new skill development for there to be an early mechanical period in which some self-consciousness and/or unnaturalness will be experienced. Participants should be encouraged to discuss these feelings and it should be acknowledged as a normal phase in the learning process. It can be pointed out that before we study and practice new skills we are uninformed about the way these behaviors work and we only use them at unconscious levels. During the

education process we become informed and consciously implement the new behavioral skills. After the formal training period we again move toward unconscious, integrated behavior but with a higher level of skill and we are now functioning from an informed position because of our knowledge base.

3. Each practice session should have an equal amount of time for "processing" what was learned and what happened during the skill practice.
4. Practice sessions should be divided into a progressive development of the component skills so there is a building effect. This can only come if the overall model of the communication process is emphasized and if the specific component skills are presented early in the theory presentation section. For example, as we will see in the skills portion of this paper, exercises progress very slowly from basic reflection of content, to blending content and feelings, to locating the source of the feeling and the feeling target, etc. This additive approach is reinforced each practice session by always beginning with the basics already covered and then adding a new component to the process.
5. No matter what the communication context (small group discussion, public speaking, debate, interpersonal, etc.) the listeners are encouraged to discover "threads" in the content and feeling levels of the speaker's communication so all the seemingly divergent statements start to show a pattern. This recognizes the tendency of most people to use a type of "stream of consciousness" technique when they talk. This approach can be used in formally prepared speeches also to encourage listener awareness and sensitivity to the speaker's ideas and emotions.
6. Videotape can be used in several ways including:

a.) use it for volunteer dyads to be played back during the processing sessions used to discuss each component initially;
b.) various tapes on communication can be used to present theoretical constructs and demonstrate practice of skills related to empathic listening (for example, the videotape entitled "Drug Free Kids" can be used to demonstrate many basic empathic listening skills);
c.) examples of effective or ineffective empathic listening can be shown by presenting portions of videotaped TV programs or scripted segments to demonstrate specific skills.

7. Encourage "real life" examples of where the empathic listening skills have been successfully used. This will increase applications and self-confidence in using the skills in everyday situations. Problems that arise in using the skills can also be discussed as valuable learning experiences.

8. It is vitally important to consistently focus on the overall transaction instead of falling into the trap of over emphasis on individual skills. Emphasizing the entire transaction and the blending of theory and skill practice seems to short circuit many of the potential dangers of skills training. Emphasis on caring and the dialogic process appear to keep the learners aware of the process nature of communication and empathic listening.

C. Practice Skill Components:

1. Use various methods/exercises to build a "feeling word" vocabulary. The average person has a very limited vocabulary for specific emotions because the majority of feelings are expressed nonverbally. Lists of feeling words can be provided and participation exercises developed to increase the specificity of emotional reflection. For instance, exercises can describe a hypothetical situation and an opening statement. A variety of possible responses, some demonstrating empathic listening

and some that are not, are provided. Each is discussed to determine how empathic the response would be in the given situation. A variation on this exercise is to give only the statements (either in written or in spoken form) and have the participants offer their own empathic responses. This approach helps encourage development of vocabulary and also provides an opportunity to work on spontaneity of response.

2. Begin with dyads or triads for early practice sessions and gradually increase the small group size as participants become more comfortable.

3. Each Carkhuff component for empathic listening is illustrated through specific exercises using volunteers who hold conversations. Usually, two participants volunteer to discuss with one designated to practice a specific listening skill component. Following the short conversation the following procedure is used to "process" the conversation:

    a.) general discussion of the transaction;
    b.) each observer provides their rating on the Carkhuff scale for the component being practiced with rationale;
    c.) the listener gives a self rating with rationale;
    d.) the speaker gives their rating for the listener--it should be noted often that this is the most significant rating since how the speaker feels is ultimately the most important aspect of the communication process.

4. After each new dimension is demonstrated and processed by the entire group, small groups (which increase in number as the unit progresses beginning with dyads) are used to continue the practice sessions. Sometimes the instructor will spend the entire small group time in one group and at other times will wander from group to group making observations.

5. Each "round" of component skill practice is followed up with the total group discussing applications, difficulties, insights. The instructor should tie the component to the overall listening process and to the transactional model of communication.

FOOTNOTES

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16 Carl R. Rogers, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Psychotherapeutic Personality Change," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21 (1957), 95-103.

17 Arnett and Nakagawa, p. 370.

18 Ibid., p. 371.

19 Ibid., p. 373.

20 Harry E. Farra, "Relational Listening," Listening Post Supplement, (Fall, 1983), p. 22.

21 Arnett and Nakagawa, p. 375.

22 John Stewart, "Interpretive Listening: An Alternative to Empathy," Communication Education, 32 (October, 1983), 379-391.

23 See: Maurice S. Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue (Chicago, IL.: The University of Chicago Press, 1956).

24 Tom Bruneau, "Empathy and Listening: A Conceptual Review and Theoretical Directions," Journal of the International Listening Association, 3 (1989), 1-20.

25 Ibid., p. 16.

26 Andrew Wolvin and Carolyn G. Coakley, Listening, 3rd ed., (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1988), p. 13.

27 William S. Howell, The Empathic Communicator (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), p. 225.

28 Arnett and Nakagawa, p. 375.

29 Wolvin and Coakley, p. 254.

30 T. Dean Thomlison, Toward Interpersonal Dialogue (New York, NY: Longman Publishers, 1982), pp. 225-240.

31 Ibid., p. 267-269.

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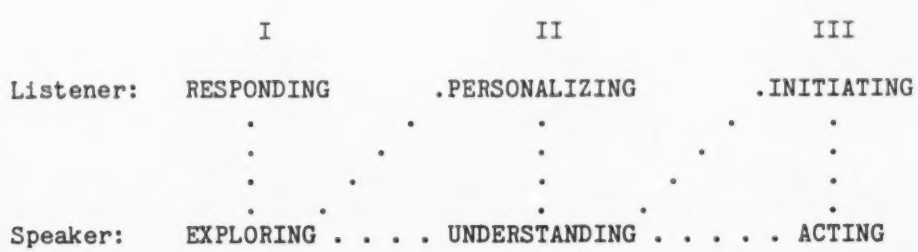
APPENDIX

A. Listening Adaptation of Carkhuff Human Resource Development Model

B. Empathy Scales

Listening Adaptation of Carkhuff H R D Model



Where the Speaker is	Where the Speaker Wants to be	How to get where the Speaker wants to be
Listener builds Interchangeable base	Listener Personalizes Content	Listener is a model and an agent

---

I. RESPONDING

The major goal of the responding phrase is to simply aid the speaker in exploring his or her situation. The listener communicates that the speaker is understood at the level presented. The listener provides an interchangable base by reflecting feeling and meaning. The basic format for responding is: "You feel_____because_____". For example:

Speaker: "I just don't know. The harder I try to be friendly with my supervisor and improve the atmosphere on the job, the worse things seem to get. I....I just don't know where to turn."

Listener: "You FEEL confused BECAUSE there is real frustration at trying hard but having nothing seem to change on the job."

Responding provides a climate in which the speaker can explore self (feelings and meanings) in a non-threatening environment. The interchangeable level 3.0 means the listener neither adds to or subtracts from the speaker's understanding.

II. PERSONALIZING

The major goal of the personalizing phase is to put the pieces of the self-exploration together so the speaker can understand their situation better and use the additive responses the listener is providing. The listener attempts to accurately add to what the speaker is saying based on the understanding of the speaker gained while building an interchangeable base. In order to keep this phase as distortion-free as possible, the listener must concentrate on accurately observing, attending and responding. There are four steps in personalizing:

STEP ONE: PERSONALIZING MEANING

The listener relates the meaning directly to the speaker's experience. The listener deals with why this is important to the speaker now or in the future. The speaker is held responsible for the meaning. The listener is thus encouraging the speaker to internalize the meaning. The format is as follows: "You feel _____because you _____". For example:

Speaker: Same statement as given on page one.

Listener: "You FEEL confused BECAUSE YOU do try hard on your job but it's frustrating that nothing seems to work." (3.25)

STEP TWO: PERSONALIZING THE PROBLEM

The listener assists the speaker in understanding what he or she cannot do that led to their experience. The listener helps the speaker spot the deficit themes that may be present in his or her expressions. The listener focuses on the present, not the past. The basic format is: "You feel_____because you cannot _____". For example,

Speaker: Same statement as given on page one.

Listener: "You FEEL confused BECAUSE YOU CAN'T figure out what you can do to make things better on the job." (3.5)

STEP THREE: PERSONALIZING THE FEELING

The listener locates the target of the feeling (self, others, etc.) and notes this in the response. This can provide more understanding for the speaker and lead toward actions, if needed. The format is the same as for personalizing the problem, with the addition of the target of the emotion: "You FEEL _____ WITH/IN/AT _____BECAUSE YOU CANNOT _____". For Example:

Speaker: Same statement as given on page one.

Listener: "You FEEL disappointed IN Yourself BECAUSE YOU CANNOT seem to come through with what would work for you on the job." (3.5)

STEP OUR: PERSONALIZING THE GOAL

The listener identifies where the speaker wants to be in relation to where the speaker is now. The behavioral goal is the other side of the problem behavior. If the listener and speaker have developed a well defined problem then the goal will usually be obvious. The format for personalizing goals is: "You FEEL _____BECAUSE YOU CANNOT _____ AND YOU WANT _____." For example:

Speaker: Same statement as given on page one.

Listener: "You FEEL disappointed IN yourself BECAUSE YOU CAN'T figure out what you could do to help your job situation AND YOU REALLY WANT to find out what to do and do it." (4.0)

III. INTIATING

The major goal of this phase is for the listener to encourage the speaker to take action if it is needed. Of course, many situations will not need action since understanding may be sufficient in itself; but if it is a crisis situation of if action is called for and desired by the speaker, then the listener can facilitate movement toward examining options and developing a plan of action. The format is: "You FEEL _____BECAUSE YOU CANNOT_____AND YOU NEED_____ TO BE ABLE TO _____ . THE FIRST STEP IS _____.

STEP ONE: DEFINE THE SPEAKER'S NEED

Speaker: Same as statement on page one.

Listener: "You FEEL disappointed IN yourself BECAUSE YOU CAN'T figure out what will really work for you on the job AND YOU NEED to understand in order TO BE ABLE to improve the atmosphere at work." (4.5)

STEP TWO: DEVELOPING AN ACTION PROGRAM

Speaker: Same as statement on page one.

Listener: Same as step one above, plus the following:
"AS A FIRST STEP let's write down what behavior you engaged in at work which seems to be most irritating to your boss." (5.0)

Note: the process of self-exploration, understanding and action may recycle several times using this model.

EMPATHY SCALES

Robert Carkhuff's models for Human Resource Development (HRD) have evolved over the last two decades. His initial work with Truax used a nine point rating scale for a number of process variables. Since the late 1960's Carkhuff has consolidated the rating of various "helper" and "helpee" behavior in such a way as to become more specific and to provide more effective learning modules. This has made it a more understandable model with more practical applications outside helping relationships.

For example, on the following pages you can follow the 1969 Carkhuff empathy scale (left) and compare it with the more precise and understandable version on the opposite side of the page (right). All the 1969 scales including the empathy scale are still useful and valid guides to follow. However, the scale on the right is a combination of listening, responding, personalizing and initiating modules and is more specific in terms of ratings and expected listener behavior. The HRD technology of Carkhuff is constantly in the process of modification, but the following scales for empathy provide a workable guideline for rating one's effectiveness on these listening and helping behaviors.

Empathic Understanding in Interpersonal Processes:
A Scale for Measurement

(Carkhuff, Robert T., Helping & Human Relations, Vol. II, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.)

Synthesized New Scale for Effective Communication

(Source: J. E. Pergel, University of Hartford. Based on communication with Carkhuff.)

Scale I

Empathic Understanding In Interpersonal Processes
A Scale for Measurement

Level I

The verbal and behavioral expressions of the helper either do not attend to or detract significantly from the verbal and behavioral expressions of the helpee(s) in that they communicate significantly less of the helpee's feelings and experiences than the helpee has communicated himself.

Example: The helper communicates no awareness of even the most obvious, expressed surface feelings of the helpee. The helper may be bored or disinterested or simply operating from a preconceived frame of reference which totally excludes that of the helpee(s).

In summary, the helper does everything but express that he is listening, understanding, or being sensitive to even the most obvious feelings of the helpee in such a way as to detract significantly from the communications of the helpee.

Level 2

While the helper responds to the expressed feeling of the helpee(s), he does so in such a way that he subtracts noticeable affect from the communications of the helpee.

Example: The helper may communicate some awareness of obvious, surface feelings of the helpee, but his communications drain off a level of the affect and distort the level of meaning. The helper may communicate his own ideas of what may be going on, but these are not congruent with the expressions of the helpee.

In summary, the helper tends to respond to other than what the helpee is expressing or indicating.

Synthesized New Scale for Effective Communication

1.0 The Helper is low on responsiveness and low on initiative. He simply gives platitudes, asks irrelevant questions or is just plain inaccurate.
The tone of the helper, as well as the content of what is said is important. If he sounds judgmental and punitive the rating is likely to be 1.0. If the helper is reasonable, accepting, and communicates some indication that he heard and understood at least something of what the helpee has said, a rating of 1.5 is permissible.

2.0 The helper is low on responsiveness and high on initiative. The helper supplies constructive guidance but in the absence of explicit understanding. He omits or is inaccurate in his reflection of the helpee's feelings but is accurate in capturing the meaning.

2.0 Surface feelings are reflected without mention of content or meaning.

2.5 A response which is accurate in reflecting the helpee's feeling but is slightly inaccurate in capturing or omits the helpee's meaning.

2.5 While simple almost verbatim restatements usually do not offer much, if any, increase in clarity to the helpee's situation, they may be rated 2.5 if the helper's tone matches that of the helpee's and the helpee continues to self explore.

Level 3

The expression of the helper in response to the expressions of the helpee(s) are essentially interchangeable with those of the helpee in that they express essentially the same affect and meaning.

Example: The helper responds with accurate understanding of the surface feelings of the helpee but may not respond to or may misinterpret the deeper feelings.

In summary, the helper is responding so as to neither subtract from nor add to the expressions of the helpee. He does not respond accurately to how that person really feels beneath the surface feelings; but he indicates a willingness and openness to do so. Level 3 constitutes that minimal level of facilitative interpersonal functioning.

3.0 The helper is high on responsiveness but low on initiative. The helper responds to where the helpee is by communicating understanding of the expressed feeling and meaning. It is essentially an interchangeable response which represents a minimal level of facilitative interpersonal functioning. Format: "You feel _____ because _____.

3.25 Accurately identifies the helpee's feelings and has accurate meaning concerning why the situation is important to the helpee now or in the future. Internal frame of reference is addressed by both accurate feelings and personalizing meaning. Format: "You feel _____ because you _____.

3.5 Accurately identifies the helpee's feelings : toward self and make accurate identification of the helpee's deficits that lead to the problem. The problem is personalized when we help the helpee understand what he cannot do that led to his experience. While this is based on the helpee's internal reality it moves him toward a better connection with external or objective reality. Format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____.

3.5 Personalizes the helpee's feeling toward self. This can be done on the basis of accurately personalizing the problem. Thus, the affect noted may change or be on a more than surface level. This response must include an accurate expression of meaning. Thus, a 3.5 response should have either accurately identified feelings and personalized meaning or personalized feeling and accurate meaning. Responses at the 3.5 level strengthen the helpee's understanding of internal and external reality. Format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____.

Level 4

The responses of the helper add noticeably to the expressions of the helpee(s) in such a way as to express feelings a level deeper than the helpee was able to express himself.

Example: The helper communicates his understanding of the expressions of the helpee at a level deeper than they were expressed and thus enables the helpee to experience and/or express feelings he was unable to express previously.

In summary, the helper's responses add deeper feeling and meaning to the expressions of the helpee.

Level 5

The helper's responses add significantly to the feeling and meaning of the expressions of the helpee(s) in such a way as to accurately express feelings levels below what the helpee himself was able to express or, in the event of ongoing, deep self-exploration on the helpee's part, to be fully with him in his deepest moments.

Example: The helper responds with accuracy to all of the helpee's deeper as well as surface feelings. He is "tuned in" on the helpee's wave length. The helper and the helpee might proceed together to explore previously unexplored areas of human existence.

In summary, the helper is responding with a full awareness of who the other person is and with a comprehensiv and accurate empathic understanding of that individual' deepest feelings.

4.0 The helper is high on responsiveness and high on initiative. The helper responds to where the helpee is and where he wants to be by communicating an understanding of the helpee's feelings toward self, his deficits and goals. This level of personalizing of the helpee's goals provides internal directionality since personal deficits are converted to personal goals. The I, E, I process readies the helpee for the helper's initiating behavior which involves action on the helpee's part. Format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____ and you want _____.

4.5 A response at this level is high on responsiveness and initiative but is more conceptual in the directionality it provides. It is the first step in the helper's action plan. The format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____ and you need _____ to be able _____." does not go the final step and specify concretely what the first specific step of the helpee's action plan is. Format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____ and you need _____ to be able to _____."

5.0 Prior to Carkhuff's problem solving emphasis, a 5.0 response was an existential experience between helper and helpee that rarely was rated.

The helper is high on responsiveness and extra high on initiative. The helper responds to where he wants to be, and how to get there. He does this by communicating an understanding of the helpee's feelings toward self, his deficits, his goals and then develops a systematic operational plan to take the helpee from where he is to his goals. The I, E, I, E cycle is completed. An operational plan aids the helpee to cope with external reality systematically on the basis of the personalized feelings, meaning, deficits and goals. Format: "You feel _____ because you cannot _____ and you need _____ to be able to _____. The first step is _____.